

LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL (NV)
22 August 1986

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Vegans told terrorists in retreat

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By Christopher Beall
Review-Journal

The man in charge of U.S. counterterrorism efforts told more than 400 Las Vegas on Thursday night that American diplomatic and military initiatives have driven terrorists into a "tactical retreat," but the threat will inevitably rear its head again.

"I am here to tell you that the U.S. is on the offensive," said Charles Allen. "Progress is being made."

Allen is the national intelligence officer for counterterrorism in the CIA, reporting to Director William Casey.

"Terrorism threatens the very fabric of our nation and other nations," he said.

There were an average of 500 attacks by terrorists in the early 1980s, Allen said. The figure rose to 600 in 1984 and peaked at 800 last year.

But since the U.S. air attack in April on terrorist bases in Libya, there has been a significant decline in terrorism by Middle Eastern groups, Allen claimed.

"Libya has shown us that the selective use of force can have a significant effect on terrorism, especially on those states that sponsor terrorism."

"The recent decline in terrorist attacks we have seen reflects a tactical retreat by those who use terrorism. They are searching for ways to conceal their hands in their future attacks," Allen said.

The CIA officer spoke at the annual barbeque of the Citizens for Responsible Government. More than 400 people paid the \$25-per-plate fee to listen to Allen and rub shoulders with some of Nevada's brightest political stars.

Along with Sen. Chic Hecht, who arranged for Allen's appearance, Reps. Harry Reid and Barbara Vucanovich showed up to dine on the buffet barbeque. Among other candidates in attendance were State Treasurer Patty Cafferata, who is running for governor, and District Attorney Bob Miller, who is running for lieutenant governor.

Allen told the group that met in the backyard of a local doctor that although terrorist attacks have declined recently, they will increase again in the future.

"Terrorists are turning to softer targets: businessmen, academicians, missionary workers, members of the press corps," he said.

"Last year, one out of every four terrorist attacks was directed against Americans or American interests. And the proportion of state-sponsored terrorism is at an all-time high."

Another problem terrorism has caused is the development of ties between political insurgencies in Latin America and narcotics traffickers.

"The links are strongest in Columbia and Peru," Allen said, explaining that the terrorist groups use the money from drug sales to buy weapons to continue their violent activity.

"We know that narcotics come through Cuba, although Cuba has very strict laws about the use of drugs inside the country. They tend to facilitate the movement through the country of drugs to the U.S.," he said.

To fight the myriad threat of terrorism, the West finally has come together to work in unison on diplomatic and intelligence fronts, Allen said.

He pointed to the unity of the allied nations in expelling suspected Libyan terrorists after the U.S. attack on Libyan targets as a positive sign in the fight against terrorism.